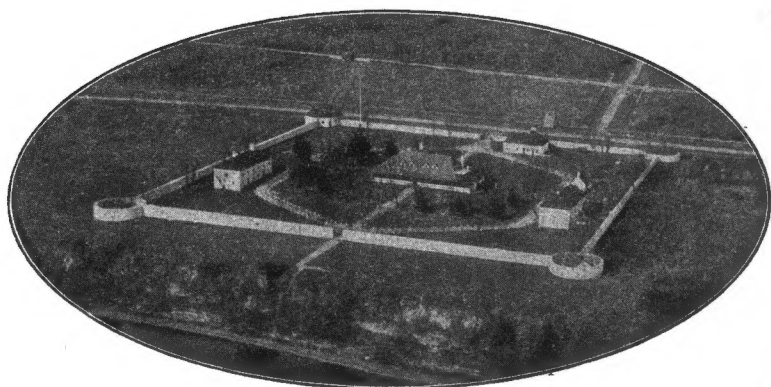


1929

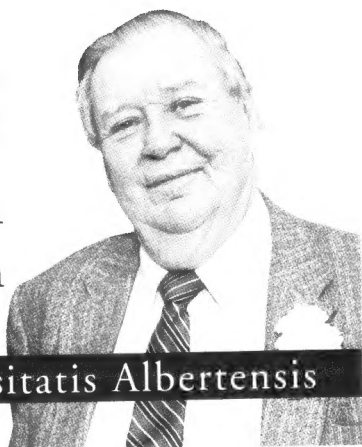


Lower Fort Garry—Aerial View

FC
3364
L6
S19
1929
HSS

Dr John West Chalmers
(1910 – 1998)

Western Canadian History Collection



Ex Libris: Universitatis Albertensis

EX LIBRIS



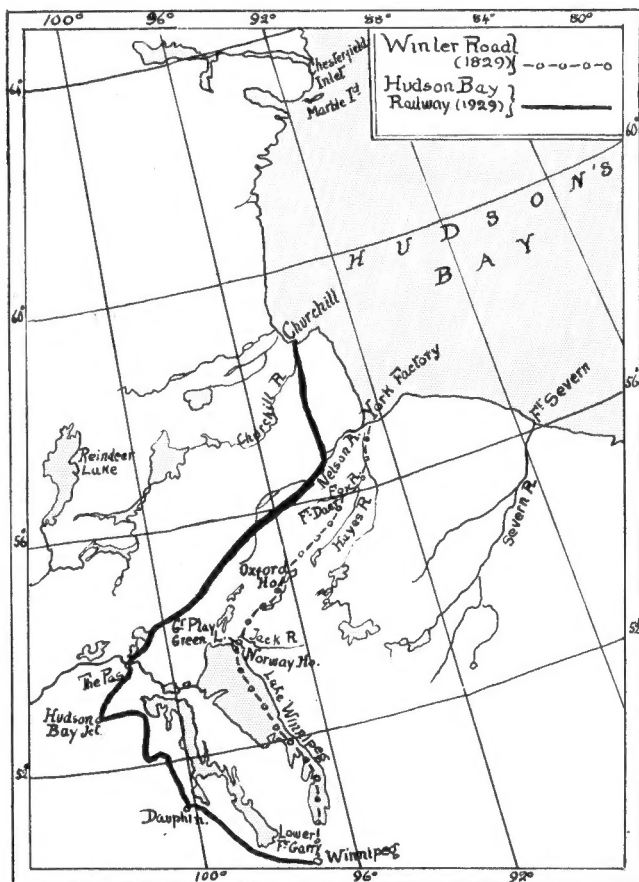
JOHN W.
CHALMERS



*Lower Fort Garry
Arrival of Dog Train from Norway House*

*With Best Wishes
for Christmas and
the New Year
from
Mr. Charles V. Sale*

*London
December, 1929*



"It is intended to send the Goods in the Fall of the year after the arrival of the Ship (at York Factory) in Boats up to the entrance of Foxes River where they will be stored until the winter sets in; to mark out a straight road to Jack River on which Indian Families will be stationed at distances of about 30 miles for the accommodation of the carriers, to commence the transport with Dogs, each Sledge of 4 Dogs hauling 6 pieces and to provision the people and Dogs with Fish of which quantities will be laid up before the close of the navigation at convenient places along the line of Roads."—Extract from George Simpson's letter to the Governor and Committee, London, 10th July, 1828.

"The building of this Railway will not only fulfil the dreams of the Westerners of a shorter and more direct route to the sea for their produce but will also make the Hudson Bay once again an important gateway into Canada."—The Hon. Charles Dunning, "The Times," 13th October, 1928.

THE WINTER ROAD

Christmas being the Feast of the Nativity, our minds are accustomed at this season to dwell pleasantly on the beginnings of things, and so I think it appropriate to send old friends these pictures to suggest the early days, not only of the Hudson's Bay Company, but of Canada.

To go back to the cradle of our enterprise would make too long a story, for the Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay, of which I am proud to be the twenty-ninth Governor in direct succession from Prince Rupert, is no less than two hundred and sixty years old—a longer life, I believe, than any other company in the world. We should have to begin in the reign of Charles the Second, or to be more precise, on the third of June, 1668, when the little *Nonsuch*, of sixty tons burthen, with forty-two souls aboard, sailed from Gravesend for Hudson's Bay. The Adventurers who found the money for that venture were Prince Rupert and certain merchants of the City of London, who acted on the information and under the guidance of two French Canadians, Radisson and Groseilliers. Thus we see how at the very start those two peoples, the French and the English, had their part in the enterprise, which led to the Charter incorporating the Company being granted by King Charles the Second in 1670.

It would be too long a business to record the trials and disappointments of the pioneers who established their trading posts along the shores of Hudson's Bay, and of the staunch proprietors who stood behind them, although they received no dividends in forty-four out of the first fifty years of trading,



King Charles the Second



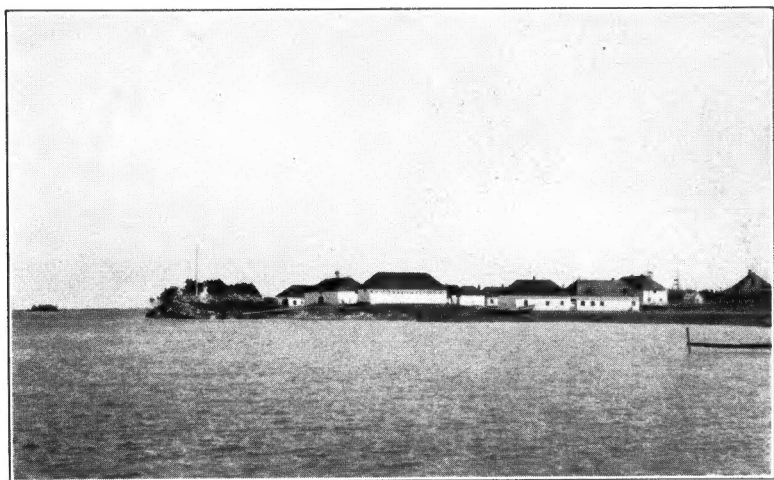
Prince Rupert

with a courage and a tenacity which must touch the hearts of all good Canadians to remember.

The first hundred years of our history is crowded with the great conflict between France and England for the mastery of the Seas and only ended when France withdrew from Canada, under the Treaty of Paris, in 1763. Then followed a period of expansion when the Company penetrated the interior, finally, in 1821, reaching the Pacific Coast, occupying the region now covered by the State of Oregon, and the State of Washington, as well as that

great area known today as the Prairie Provinces of Canada as far south as the present boundary between Canada and the United States. In the course of that vast expansion, the Company had to meet the keen rivalry of the traders of Montreal who finally organized themselves for the fight as the North-West Company, a competition which only ended when the two Companies combined in 1821 in what would now be called a "merger." Thus it came about that the Hudson's Bay Company, by itself, and as the inheritor of all the other Fur Trading Companies, occupied the 2,600,000 square miles, which were surrendered to the Crown and thence to the Dominion in the year 1870.

This brief outline may serve to suggest something of the debt we owe to the pioneers in the long line of the Company's service since the days of Prince Rupert. But for the Company, it is safe to say, the Dominion would not now possess those ample boundaries which secure her greatness and provide her future. To display this historic truth more in detail, let me now turn to the particular story which is illustrated by these pictures of Lower Fort Garry.



Norway House

A hundred years ago, round about 1830, the population on either side of the International Line was—international. There were no Government forces to indicate the frontier between Ruperts Land and the United States, nor did the Indians recognise any difference. The Hudson's Bay Company, which was then reorganising its affairs, realised the dangers of such a situation, and decided to mark not only its occupation but its actual possession—commercially, politically and otherwise—in an unmistakable manner. The embodiment of this wise precaution was Lower Fort Garry, which, with the Upper Fort Garry, constituted the only stone fortifications within a thousand miles—north, south, east or west.

The fort was built below the rapids to secure safe communication by river and lake to Norway House. A winter road, or rather a winter trail, was laid from Norway House to York Factory, and over that road all supplies for the Fort, including the very guns which still guard the door of this old building, were brought from England *via* Hudson's Bay. The picture of the dog train arriving at Lower Fort Garry in the winter of nineteen hundred and four reminds us of the courage and endurance of the pioneers; of the long journey in short winter days and dark winter nights, with heavy loads up and down



Canoes



York Boats

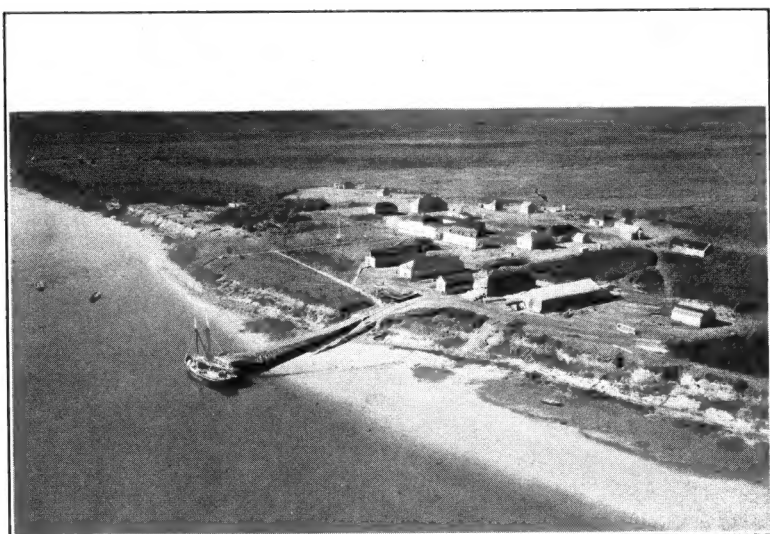
dale, from Fox River to Fort Daer on to Oxford House, then to Norway House and finally the long stretch across the ice-covered waters of Lake Winnipeg and the river to Lower Fort Garry. Compare that with the comfort and speed of the trains which are making ready to take you on smooth rails to the shores of that same Hudson's Bay, and then turn aside for a moment and remember if you will at this season all those distant places in the great lone land of the far North, where the Company's men still keep up the winter roads, still carry the mails and still take supplies by dog train even as a hundred years ago.



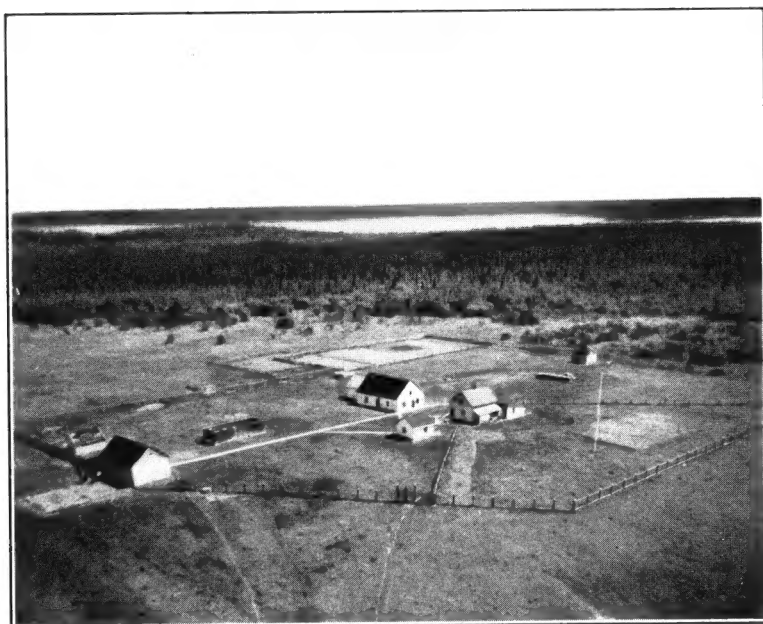
Sir George Simpson

Lower Fort Garry was built to secure the frontier of the Prairie pioneers, and let me add that it played a notable part in the subsequent history of Canada. On several occasions, the first being in 1846, it was occupied by the military forces of the Crown; it was there that the first treaty with the Indians was concluded in 1871; it was there also that the first body of North-West Mounted Police were quartered in 1873; the details of the Franklin Relief expedition conducted by Dr. Rae were settled within its walls; in the Riel Rebellion of 1870, it gave refuge to the Loyalists.

Thus it is part of the history of Canada, as well as of the history of the Company. Sir George Simpson had his quarters in the Fort nearly a hundred years ago, and in its rooms were held the Council meetings of the Company. It is easy to imagine the meetings—Sir George Simpson, then Governor of the Company in Canada, with the principal officers of the Service drawn from their widely separated districts, discussing such problems as transport to posts as far north as Fort Yukon, now in Alaska, and Fort Macpherson on the Mackenzie River;



York Factory—Aerial View



Oxford House—Aerial View

as far west as Fort St. James in British Columbia and Fort Vancouver in what is now the State of Washington; and to many another place besides; and, of course, to York Factory, and the other posts on Hudson's Bay.

Questions of policy, relations with the Indians, restrictions on the sale of liquor, appointments in the service, the trade of the whole country—all were debated, gravely and methodically, with intimate knowledge and infinite care, by those fur-trading pioneers, with their rifles in the racks and their dog-sleighs round the door.

So we see the manner in which the foundations of Western Canada were laid, in that fortified post of the Hudson's Bay Company, and how the trail of the old Fur Traders sketched out the map and laid down the frontiers of the Great Dominion. It is pleasant, round the Christmas fire, to remember the hardships and heroisms of the past, when only the winter road, and in summer the birch-bark canoe or York boat, pierced the savage wilderness of the Indian and the buffalo, and to reflect that that once inhospitable waste is now starred with homesteads and rich in grain and cattle; that where the guns guarded the old fort, the pilgrim in spring and summer now finds a garden set with trees and flowers.

"It is always the adventurers who accomplish great things."—*Montesquieu*.

CHARLES V. SALE.



Lower Fort Garry—Summer Scene

University of Alberta Library



0 1620 1085 4774

A24574